

Action!



Teaching the Word.
Reaching the World!

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The Dream of myWBS:

Being Connected

It began five years ago. The WBS Internet team began brainstorming what might be the “perfect” WBS web-site—something we coined *myWBS*.

Now, we’re excited to announce the release of *the second version* of that effort—*myWBS 2.0*. *myWBS 2.0* is where teachers, students, coordinators and churches are merging into a single on-line location.

We envisioned a single site where all WBS teachers and students could *connect* with each other—to interact and discuss the Good News of Jesus. We pictured a site where teachers would have access to tools from WBS to make their efforts easier and faster. We pictured a site where WBS news, events, and campaigns would be announced, where follow up would be tracked, and conversions would be heralded. We pictured a site where students would learn about the Lord and converse with caring Christians. We sketched it out, printed it and hung it

in our office. It is still there today.

Before long, in late 2004, *myWBS 1.0* was released. It has been a useful, but limited, application compared to the original vision. It is two separate sites for email teachers and postal teachers to keep track of their students. Nevertheless, over 2,100 WBS study helpers have used this current *myWBS* to track 66,456 WBS students.

The new, upcoming release of *myWBS 2.0* provides an expanded set of tools and resources to all WBS teachers. The postal teacher version is scheduled for release

May 15th. The email teacher version is scheduled for release June 1st.

myWBS 2.0 offers the following integrated modules that serve for each type of WBS user, including WBS teachers, students, and follow up workers:

- Web-based Courses for Web students
- The *MediaZone* with WBS news, articles, and blogs







myWBS connects people from all over the world.

- The Postal Teachers Module
- The Email Teachers Module
- The Automated Follow Up System (AFS)
- The *Church Affiliate* Module

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Belgian Ambassadors

By Steve Collins Jr.

World Bible School has a special teaching team in Marcel and Jeanne Bertholet. With great enthusiasm, they bring their own personal touch—using both French and English—to thousands of men, women, boys and girls.

Marcel and Jeanne were baptized into Christ in 1950 in their native Belgium. There Marcel, a retired railroad worker, preached and was a Bible teacher.

When they moved to the United States, Marcel accepted a job as maintenance supervisor for Michigan Christian College. Marcel (turning 89) began his WBS work in 1986 with ten students. Since that time, he has taught people by mail in “every country of the world.” Does he mean, “many countries of the world”? He repeats, “In every country of the world.”

As to numbers of students he has taught, he replies, “It doesn’t matter whether I know how many—God knows.”

Marcel and Jeanne devote full time to WBS



Jeanne and Marcel Bertholet

and its companion method, World English Institute. The Bertholets were based at Sylvan Hills church in Little Rock, and now live and work with the Lady Lake church in Florida. In their home, the study shows their focus. Marcel has so much information at his fingertips, one wonders how he manages to organize it all. But he does. It’s all there: All the lessons that he sends to his students; French and English Bibles; orderly files bulging with student letters and photographs; attractive frames displaying brilliantly hued stamps of the world.... Africa, Asia, Europe, island of the Atlantic and Pacific. Marcel and Jeanne have visited them all by mail and impacted many lives through air mail missionary journeys.


Marcel also helps learners of English through WEI. “When a student is enrolled to

learn English, I always move them into the WBS lessons,” Marcel explains. From there, Marcel moves his students through additional Bible study programs and courses.

“I never give up on a student,” said Marcel. “As long as there is interest. That is all a student needs to be in our program: interest and desire to learn. They are far away in their country but they are close to my heart in study. I try everything I can.” One WBS student eventually became a Gospel preacher in Michigan.

“It’s my happiness and my life—to work for the Lord,” Marcel eloquently intones in his elegant French accent.

He encourages teachers not to become discouraged if their students do not return their lessons quickly. Many reasons may account for delays, including a student’s inability to pay postage. Typical WBS students are not wealthy, and postage costs much more for them than it does for us. Patience is the best watchword here.

“I enjoy my job very much,” says Marcel. Speaking of his co-worker, Jeanne, he says, “I have a good wife. She helps me. She helps me a lot.” They continue their good work with intensity, determination and grace. 



The Word at Work: Meet Desiree

World Bible School Internet now offers web-based HTML courses that allow self-paced study and automated grading. This means that students can study WBS lessons as far and as fast as they desire. When email lessons are requested, they will continue to be exchanged and graded by WBS teachers themselves. But with web-based courses, while we strongly encourage all students to interact with WBS teachers, we no longer make that connection mandatory. The relationships remain critically important. We expect one out of three web-based students will indeed choose to converse with a WBS teacher. But teachers now can spend less time on grading and can focus on building relationships and answering specific spiritual needs as requested.

Student applicants have always outnumbered Internet teachers. The great demands used to result in a bottleneck that slowed studies and incited too many drop outs. We had to ask which was more vital, the required personal contact or the message? As important as the personal touch is, the Good News itself holds the power for conversion. So, while continually emphasizing relationships, web-based courses now set students free to pursue their Bible studies at their own pace. As an example of one student’s progress, here is a recent email from Kit Mullins:

On February 23rd, 2009, Desiree, a 49 year old cake decorator from Iowa enrolled in the [newly launched] WBS web courses.


On Saturday, April 4th, at 6:31 PM Desiree

requested baptism. She wrote:

Please help. I am ready to accept [the] body of Christ into my heart with baptism of water.... If you can help me, I would really be blessed. God bless you all. Desiree.

Desiree has completed *The Way, God Has Spoken, This is Good News, and Knowing Jesus* courses.

Kit added, “She has had no interaction with a study helper since she enrolled.”

We would have preferred personal contact, but the Gospel itself has convicted Desiree. Now we are working to connect her with Christians who can follow-up on her request and integrate her in the local body of Christ. As Kit’s email concludes, “Praise God! May He grant us wisdom and strength as we labor.” 

Tribute to Sibyl Reese

Editor's Note: My mother died January 12, 2009. She left a great spiritual legacy. Here are adapted excerpts from my tribute at her funeral at Pyburn Street church of Christ, Pocahontas, Arkansas.

In a few minutes here, how can we do justice to a life of 87 years? We can offer just a glimpse of the full story of Sibyl Reese—Mother to Robert and me. We can begin to express our thankfulness. We can

point to her example to inspire others.

Grandchildren sometimes get a distorted view of an older person's life because they see only the declining years. In Mother's case, if they could step back in time, they would see an energetic lady of unusual courage. After World War II, Mrs. Rowe visited Searcy to recruit mature co-workers for African missions. Finding no one older, she decided to take Sibyl, the one young lady finally to volunteer.

Mother graduated from Harding College.



Robert, Sibyl and Boyd Reese return to Africa after '49 furlough.

The tradition was for the graduating class to buy a permanent gift for the college. Instead, her class of 40, with George Benson's encouragement, donated \$10 each to pay Sibyl's ticket to Africa.

[Later, after tours in Africa, Sibyl returned to live in the USA.] She started teaching with

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Above & Beyond

by Kevin Rhodes

Email + Snail Mail = What??

One soul is what, according to a short story recounted by Mark Ligon, WBS Coordinator at the Vanderveer Street church of Christ. Here's how it played out. Mark has been teaching his postal student, Abdul, and tracking him using *myWBS*, the online resource for WBS teachers. Abdul has just completed his latest lesson (his sixth) over two years: "I want to be baptized."

Sunday, February 8, 5:21 PM

Mark emails WBS follow up contact, Isaac Daye, in western Africa. He passes information about Abdul, his progress, and his address in Freetown, Sierra Leone.

Monday, February 9, 10:53 AM

Isaac emails brother Jacob Sesay in Freetown, copying Mark: Indeed the Lord is giving increase to our team effort.

Tuesday, February 10, 1:06 AM

Jacob emails a response: Dear brother Mark, we will contact Abdul. Thanks for your effort in the Lord.

Wednesday, February 11, 6:10 AM

Jacob emails Mark: We are very pleased to let you know that by the grace of God, your WBS student has obeyed the Gospel call in baptism this morning! I can sense the joy in him. Thank you for being on the front line for Jesus in His army. The photo of his baptism is attached.

Now is that great stuff, or what?! Technology...snail mail...Christians from all over, all working together. Here's Mark's exclamation point: All thanks and praise and glory be given to our wonderful Lord God Almighty!!! To which we can all say, "AMEN!"



Action!

EDITOR John Reese

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Thoughts on a Thief

by Ron Pottberg

Someone yelled out, “*Thief! We have caught the Thief!*”

A crowd quickly gathered and soon it was a mob. It was early Sunday morning, but a large crowd soon came to abuse the young man who had been stealing from his neighbors for some months.

And now they had caught him red-handed. They threw him to the ground in the middle of the dusty, dirty street. Fists flew and beat the young man’s body.

A stone was picked up from the ground and thrown. And then another and another.

A Christian brother heard the commotion and went to investigate. Seeing this terrible thing, he rushed forward to try and stop this before it was too late. But it was already too late. Stone after stone rained down on this young man and then a final crushing blow to the head with a large rock. The young man lay dead in the street.

The crowd slowly went back to their homes. Some would rush off to their work, some to other tasks of a normal busy day.

Some would prepare for Sunday morning church services, where in just a few hours time, they would sing of the love of Jesus and how He died for all of us.

As I was told this story by lips that had seen the body the day before laying there in the street—crushed, absent of life—I could not help but think of the words of Jesus.

“*Let him who is without sin cast the first stone.*” [John 8:7]



Ron Pottberg meets with WBS campaign students.



African students gather to sign up to receive WBS lessons through the mail.

And perhaps other words from a cross, but with a different twist.

“*Father, forgive them for they KNOW what they do.*”

The body lay there all that day as a testimony to all the community of what happens to a thief. And these same people who had taken up stones against another would go off to church and with those same hands hold Bibles and say prayers to a loving God.

Was justice served? No arrest, no courts, no lawyers, no appeals, no time in prison. But that is the way it is done in this part of the world.

I was told this story Monday afternoon by a brother in Christ.

We had walked that day down those same dusty dirty streets. We had spoken to people about the love of God and the need for Christ in their lives.

We had enrolled hundreds for free Bible lessons from World Bible School. We had possibly even talked to some of those who had handed out justice just the day before on these same streets.

That week we enrolled thousands to study God’s word.

But as I reflect back on that young man’s life and the *first stone* that was thrown, I can’t help but think: “If we had only been here sooner. If we had only reached this one when he was younger. If we had only showed them the love of Jesus sooner.”

Maybe it would have made a difference. Maybe a young man would not lay dead in the streets of Tema.

While we can’t change what happened; we can only pray that the word of God will make a difference in the days, the months and the years to come to those that do study God’s word with us.

Each day is a day of opportunity. Don’t miss yours.



Thoughts on Travel

By Isaac Daye

The Apostle Paul was shipwrecked, yet he did not give up making mission trips. We traveled from Kenema to Kono in Sierra Leone on December 13, 2008, a distance of 79 miles. It should have taken two and a half hours, but it took us over eight hours. We narrowly escaped a car wreck when the jeep we traveled in broke down five times in less than six hours. Eventually, it gave up a front tire in protest that it could not endure the roughness and rockiness of the bad road.

At one point we had a breakdown in the middle of a tick jungle. During an hour for repair work, Ron [Pottberg, WBS VP] used the time to share our mission with a police sergeant and a Muslim. They enrolled to study God’s word with World Bible School.



Two loyal WBS workers and Isaac Daye change tires after riding on rough roads.

After such dangerous mission trips, one is inclined to say, “That is my last time.” But the joy of our labor and the saving of souls far outweighs our personal safety and comfort, and compels us to keep going. Lord willing, we will be back on a similar mission in November 2009.

My luggage was left behind in the Gambia. For the entire two weeks away, I had to borrow clothes from Ron who was willing to share everything he had, including his Bible.

At one point Ron said, “Satan has been at work against us on this trip.” That is how he summarized all the pains we went through battling against mosquitoes, shortages, hours of waiting for transport, etc. Love demands that





Isaac Daye baptizes a youth in Sierra Leon.

we sacrifice the comfort of our home, time and life. It is worth the result. The Lord blessed our trip with: 41 souls baptized into the body of Christ, 25 in Sierra Leone and 16 in Liberia.

Also in Sierra Leone, we enrolled 3,000 new students, and we conducted the first graduation of a part time Bible school. Over 40 WBS students graduated in Liberia.

Are these not compelling reasons why we must continue making these mission trips and for you to keep on praying for and supporting us?



Another 100 Pounds!

By John Reese

Beth and I returned mid-April from a month of travels in Zambia, South Africa, Zimbabwe and England. Along the way, we delivered WBS Introduction Lessons. Then we brought back 100 pounds of return answers from WBS students, mainly from Zimbabwe. Consider that our friend Washington Mhlanga had brought 90 pounds just two weeks previously, when he came to Abilene for a conference on Zimbabwe. Then consider that Alice, his wife, had not yet picked up three large mailbags waiting at the Post Office in Harare. Then consider that heavy mail boxes are simultaneously in transit via South Africa. Now, realize that a typical answer section from one student weighs about a quarter of an ounce.



That gives you an idea of the vast volume of interaction between Zimbabwean students and their American teachers.

One key to this volume is Business Reply Mail (BRM), whereby WBS teachers send with their courses a postage-paid envelope for answers to be returned free. Zimbabwe's phenomenal results led us to Zambia to set up a similar system. Postal authorities there, however, continue to insist on exorbitant rates, and we now are seeking alternative methods.

Meanwhile, a unique event threatened our BRM method in Zimbabwe. The government declared its own currency, the Zimbabwe dollar, officially "dead." That sudden switch to the US dollar and South African rand threw prices into turmoil. The Post Office wanted to charge us 70 U.S. cents per return. Alice Mhlanga refused to pay such a precedent-setting price (hence the bags waiting at the Avondale Post Office). Eventually, she negotiated them down to 40 cents, and enlisted my help which further reduced the rate to 30 cents for an interim period.

We dealt with Zimbabwean officials who were helpful and efficient. They appreciate the benefit WBS brings to their nation. We assured them that we had been praying for the mail to keep flowing, even amid Zimbabwe's chaos, and we complimented their service. They seemed truly touched by our concern and our prayers. With a new advertising drive, we envision Zimbabwe's enrollment exceeding 500,000—approaching 5% of the nation's entire population. Please continue to pray that the poor have ways to correspond, and that WBS will impact similarly large proportions of the population in Zambia, South Africa and other nations.



WBS Teachers' Dream Comes True

By Larry Hagerman

Some eleven years ago, John Reese spoke to our congregation, the Central church of Christ in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. He introduced us to the concept of sending Bible lessons to students in foreign countries. My wife Jill and

I volunteered. By chance, almost all of our World Bible School students were from Kenya, which led to us to help homeless street children in Nairobi.

These interests led us to visit Kenya in September, 2006. While with the program called Made In The Streets, we asked some of the young children, ages 13 to 16, if they would like to learn more about God through WBS. Five girls volunteered to become our students, and they recruited more young people.

Lessons and letters were sent back and forth between Kenya and America as the students grew in their knowledge of God and became our friends. Jill and I were blessed to be able to return to Kenya in November, 2008. One of our students, Susan Wambui, came to realize through the WBS lessons she needed to be baptized. She knew Jill and I would be in Kenya in a few weeks and asked if I would baptize her. After our arrival, another student, Eunice Wambui, requested me to baptize her also. Although not related, the young ladies were friends and had studied their lessons together. On Sunday, November 16, I experienced what many WBS teachers can only dream about—baptizing their own students. All three of us were excited; the girls because they became Christians, and me, because I got to participate in the blessed event. It was so rewarding and exciting that Jill and I wanted to share the moment with all of our fellow WBS teachers. Before we left, 25 more students enrolled as WBS students.



Larry Hagerman baptizes Susan Wambui in Kenya.



Larry Hagerman baptized these friends, Eunice Wambui and Susan Wambui.



Tips for Teachers!

BRM in Zimbabwe goes from \$.15 to \$.30 per return. See John's article on page 5.

SALE! Convenient plastic Speed Grader for each Master Series course at \$1.00 plus shp. Map of Ghana, map of Nigeria at \$1.00 plus shp.

SALE! Commentary on the New Testament in Simple English, editor Van Tate, 1384 pages, at \$10.00 plus shp. What a great resource for leaders, students, friends and relatives!

ALSO ENQUIRE about the Teacher Training DVD at \$5.00; world maps, etc. For all orders, phone toll free 877-393-0211.

A Tribute to Sibyl Reese from page 3

World Bible School in 1985 with the Ravenden Springs congregation, which partnered with John and Beth Reese in South African missions. Sibyl taught many students and a number were baptized.



Sibyl Reese

Once, when attending an annual Lectureship in Botswana, I needed an assistant to accompany me for a WBS follow-up visit. Unfortunately, my helper would miss a whole day of the long awaited Lectureship. One man, Jimmy Pokeng, volunteered and served as my guide and translator.

As we traveled together, I asked Jimmy why he was making such a sacrifice. He revealed that he had come to Christ through WBS, and he had greatly appreciated it when someone followed up and baptized him. Did Jimmy remember his teacher's name? The answer was, "My teacher is Sibyl Reese." I was excited to tell him, "Sibyl Reese is my Mother." Here, in the depths of Africa, I had met a true brother, for we both had the same spiritual Mother in the Gospel!

The Dream of myWBS from page 1

- The Web-based Teachers Module
- Live Enrollment help

Today, the dream of myWBS is a reality. Web students around the globe are already studying the web-based *Master Series* courses. Postal and email teachers will be enjoying the new features of myWBS 2.0 late this spring.

For more information about myWBS 2.0, visit <http://my.wbschool.net/blogs/thatsit>.

By the way, why not sign up for the WBS Technology Newsletter? Drop me a note and we'll include you. Kit Mullins - kit@worldbibleschool.net



Jake Coppinger: Soul Winner

By Joel Coppinger

Joel P. (Jake) Coppinger was born May 25, 1918 to Joe and Edith Coppinger. Jake was raised in Oklahoma. He dropped out of his senior year to marry his high school sweetheart Wilma Moore on December 14, 1936, and moved to West Texas.

By the spring of 1945 the family moved from Texas to Tulare, California. In 1955 Jake was restored to the church and attended a men's training class. He started "giving talks" in the area. The summer of 1956 the Tulare congregation asked him to "fill in" for a few months while they searched for a preacher. He continued in that role for ten years. From the start he realized that soul winning was his mission in life. He studied every form of evangelism available from flannel graph and charts



Wilma and Jake Coppinger with Ron Pottberger and Joel Coppinger

to film-strips and Joy Buses. Jake was a planner, organizer and motivator. In the mid 60's he organized and lead the largest "Campaign for Christ" ever held in Tulare.

In the late 70s Jake moved to Santa Maria, California where Clyde and Lucille Martin soon had him teaching World Bible School students in Ghana, West Africa. At the 1978

Yosemite Family Camp, Samuel Obeng of Ghana Bible College invited Jake to Ghana. The next year Jake took a campaign team. They landed in the midst of a military uprising, but this didn't deter him. WBS fulfilled his mission in life.

Soon Jimmie Lovell asked him to organize a "follow up program" to contact WBS students who requested visits and baptism. He returned many times to mission fields, especially in Africa and India. Many who accompanied him on these campaigns called them "life changing."

He continued his work until his two strokes in 2002. Though limited physically, he participated in the daily work at WBS of Tulare County until his passing February 3, at age 90. He and Wilma were married just over 72 years. People around the world celebrate his impactful life and mourn his passing.



did you know?

A continuing series of WBS facts...

26,000 request baptism. Each year.



You read that correctly. *Twenty six thousand souls.* Just like Desiree on p.2.

At any given time, World Bible School is teaching well over 2 million students with everyday, volunteer Christians. We can expect (based on churches that keep good records of their WBS program) 1.3% of the students to continue through their lessons and request to be baptized. 1.3%? Is that a good percentage? It is when it's applied



to 2,000,000 students. The answer is 26,000 people, seeking to know Jesus Christ as their Savior.

It's truly amazing how God works through WBS and WBS teachers. What other ministry do you know of that reaches millions with the Gospel Truth and moves tens of thousands to give their lives to Jesus in baptism? That—at the same time—involves 10,000 Christians in the process?



Our brotherhood has many very worthy ministries that provide Bibles, print materials, send missionaries, broadcast over radio, television, and the Internet. But there is nothing in the brotherhood that has the reach,



the breadth, the involvement, the cost-effective impact of World Bible School. May God continue to bless the evangelistic outreach of WBS and His people.

Upcoming with WBS...



It just gets more and more exciting!

Jimmie Lovell's vision is being fulfilled. See the July issue.



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